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MODI TO INAUGURATE KASHI TEMPLE CORRIDOR TODAY

The 900-metre-long corridor links the *jyotirlinga* directly to three Ganga ghats in an extensive transformation of Varanasi

PROJECT A BOON FOR SIVA DEVOTEES

The ₹900-crore project fulfils PM Narendra Modi's vision of easing access to the Kashi Vishwanath temple for devotees and providing new facilities. Over 400 buildings were bought and removed around the area to clear space. The inauguration, coming ahead of Uttar Pradesh's state polls, will be a three-day extravaganza. PM Modi will arrive on a boat on the Ganga | PB

Grand gateways and ornamental arches are part of the corridor
The Kashi Vishwanath shrine in Varanasi
RIVER GANGA
LALITA GHAT
From where the corridor begins
A night view of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor

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NEW BUILDINGS BUILT IN THE DECLUTTERED PROJECT AREA

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

K'taka sees third case of Omicron

Techie first tested -ve on arrival from S Africa

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA reported its third Omicron case on Sunday. The patient, a 34-year-old software engineer, had returned from South Africa, where he had gone on an official assignment.

"He is isolated and is being treated at a government hospital," Health and Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar said. The patient landed at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru on December 1. He tested negative on arrival, but he isolated himself as per protocol because he was returning from an "at-risk" country.

"The next day, he complained of body and muscle pain, which are symptoms of the Omicron variant of coronavirus. We tested his samples again which showed him to be positive for Covid," Sudhakar said.

The patient's RT-PCR test done the next day showed a drop in S-Gene, which is again an indicator of the Omicron variant. He was shifted to Bowring & Lady Curzon Hospital, designated for Omicron patients, on December 3 and his samples were sent for genome sequencing. "The test results arrived on Sunday that confirmed he was infected with Omicron," Sudhakar said.

FALSE RESULT

Sources from the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) said the first test report at the airport could be a 'false negative' as CB-NAAT test is used at the airport. It is a rapid RT-PCR with results available in 45 minutes. But the accuracy is iffy at only 60 per cent.

CONTINUED ON: P3

2nd patient negative, but has bacterial infection

A doctor from Bengaluru, only the second patient to test positive for Omicron variant, has tested negative for Covid. But he will continue to remain in hospital as he is now infected with post-viral bacterial infection. Sources at Bowring & Lady Curzon Hospital said his RT-PCR test came negative on Saturday, nearly 21 days after he tested positive for Omicron. P3

NATIONWIDE	DEC 11	DEC 12
Fresh cases	7,992	7,774
Recoveries	9,265	8,464
Deaths	393	306

KARNATAKA	DEC 11	DEC 12
Fresh cases	317	330
Recoveries	317	304
Deaths	2	4

SA epicentre data offers hope

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

Even as India steps up surveillance and preparation in anticipation of a Covid surge, the latest news from the epicentre of the Omicron wave in South Africa could offer some comfort.

The new analysis from the Gauteng province shows that its current Covid-19 wave may have peaked already, with the highest number of cases recorded on Friday. The fatality rate was less than 0.5%. The world's first Omicron case was detected in the country less than three weeks ago.

The analysis is a model from the University of Johannesburg, based on the hospital data from the South Africa's National Institute of Communicable Disease, which was reported on Sunday. The data showed clear signs that Omicron infections are milder than the ones caused by Delta, which led to a devastating wave of Covid-19 in many countries this year.

Back home in India, where the Omicron tally now stands at 38, the Centre is continuing to pressure states on close surveillance, though there is no indication Omicron is triggering a surge in some districts. In a letter to 10 states on Saturday, Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan suggested measures like night curfews in districts that are witnessing high Covid positivity rate in the past two weeks.

Meanwhile, the WHO said after a review of early data on Sunday that Omicron is more transmissible than Delta and reduces vaccine efficacy against infection and transmission. It also causes less severe symptoms.

Rahul sharpens attack on Hindutva, Modi govt

RAJESH ASNANI @ Jaipur

CONGRESS leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday launched a blistering attack on the BJP at a massive rally here, trying to draw a clear distinction between the terms Hindu and Hindutva, saying the latter was a political tool to grab power.

At a rally that was called to pressure the Centre to curb runaway inflation and price rise, Rahul's focus was on sharpening the ideological line that separates Hindutva-vadis from other Hindus. "I am a Hindu, but I am not a Hindutva-vadi. All of us are Hindus. Mahatma Gandhi was a Hindu but Nathuram Godse was a Hindutva-vadi," he said.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi makes a gesture while speaking to his mother and party president Sonia Gandhi, during a rally in Jaipur on Sunday | PTI

While the path of Hindus is that of truth, the lust for power is the calling card for Hindutva-vadis, he alleged. Gandhiji stood for *Satyagraha* (search for truth), while Hindutva-vadis like Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government are *Sattagrahi* (power grabber), he charged. Rahul went on to link inflation with Hindutva-vadis: "If there is inflation, then this is the work of the Hindutva-vadis."

Referring to the farmers' year-long protest which recently forced the government to roll-back its three farm sector reform laws, Rahul argued that the prime minister betrayed the farmers "because he is a Hindutva-vadi. When the Hindu farmers stood up, the Hindutva-vadi said 'I apologise'."

Echoing him, his sister and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra charged that the BJP government wants to sell off to select industrialist friends whatever the Congress had built in 70 years. P7

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EXPRESS READ

CM hints at tabling anti-conversion bill

Hubballi: The anti-conversion bill may be tabled in the winter session of the legislature beginning in Hubballi from Monday, hinted CM Basavaraj Bommai on Sunday. The cabinet and also the legislature will discuss the legislation if a committee set up to study it submits a report. P4

6 Int'l schools from Bengaluru top list

Bengaluru: Six international schools from here topped the Education World India School Rankings. Indus International School is the best international day-cum-boarding school, while The International School Bangalore, Greenwood High International, and Stonehill International School stood 2nd, 3rd and 4th, respectively. P2

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